



## **SETTING GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

In order to become proficient in time management, you must perfect goal setting and prioritizing, which are two of the key skills required. Developing these skills is like planting a field. You prepare the soil and take care of the seeds until they form strong roots. The strong roots which are goal setting and prioritizing provide a foundation for developing future time management skills.

### **Goal Setting**

A solid goal setting system is the key to effective time management. Setting your goals wisely, you get a sense of achievement, stay focused and organized, increase motivation, reduce stress, and identify and eliminate roadblocks to achieving more.

As you know, goals are changes one wants to make in life which are based on your values and passions. It is like a goal line; it is where you want to go. No one can determine your goals for you. No one can tell you what makes a good goal, but using the criteria that follow will help you when going through the goal setting process.

The criteria for setting goals include being: 1) specific, 2) measurable, 3) believable, 4) completed within a certain time frame, and 5) written down. You must also identify and know the difference between short-term and long-term goals. The short-term goals can be steps in attaining the long-term goal.

Let's look at each of the points individually:

- **Must be written down**  
It is important to record your goals, either on paper or on a computer and later printed out. It is too easy to disregard your goals if they are not recorded and you do not have a copy to carry with you.
- **Must be believable**  
You must believe your goals can be achieved. It does not matter what others think, you must believe in them so you will be motivated to make the effort. Believable does not mean easy, but it does mean attainable and realistic.
- **Must be specific and measurable**  
Your goals must be specific and measurable. For example, earn an "A" in Algebra this semester.
- **Must be completed within a certain timeframe (set deadlines)**  
It is important to know when your goal will be completed. Not setting deadlines can drag out accomplishing the goal and lower your level of motivation because you cannot see an end. Setting deadlines will motivate and raise your morale. This allows you to move onto your next goal.

- **Identify the short-term goals vs. the long-term goals**

You need to know the difference between short-term goals and long-term goals. You need to understand you can set short-term goals to accomplish your long-term goals. It is good to be working on one short-term goal and one long-term goal at the same time. Setting the short-term goals and achieving them will build a strong track record and momentum for your long-term goals. Long-term goals keep you headed in the right direction and can provide a sense of purpose, not to mention the challenge of something exciting to work toward.

## **Prioritizing**

Another key to effective time management is prioritizing. Prioritizing is about making choices. Tasks that are most important to us (like socializing with friends, family time, or improving ourselves) often are not urgent. To prioritize effectively you need to be able to recognize what is important, as well as see the difference between urgent and important. The important (or high priority) tasks are the things that help us achieve our long-term goals or can have significant long-term consequences.

Even though at first glance many of the tasks we need to take care of during the day seem equally urgent and important, a closer look highlights their lesser importance in the long run. With good prioritizing skills, you finish the urgent ones as soon as possible so they do not create crises. Then, you focus your attention and try to give more and more time to those important (but not urgent) tasks, the ones that give you the most reward in the long run.

Prioritizing principles can be applied to planned and unplanned tasks. Use the “A”, “B”, or “C” To Do List rule for planned tasks. The “A” List is the most important. The “B” List is done only after the “A” List has been completed. The “C” List comes after both the “A” and “B” lists items are completed. For unplanned tasks, rely on your knowledge and clarity of your goals and your instincts to get them completed.

Always evaluate your list to see if any of the tasks can be delegated or eliminated. Practice will perfect your skill so you will become a good time manager.

**DON'T LET THIS  
HAPPEN TO YOU!**

**“I wasted time, and now  
doth time waste me....”**

**☞ William Shakespeare  
(King Richard in  
*Richard II*)**